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CLASS STRUGGLE Vs CLASS COLLABORATION

By EARL BROWDER

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Class Struggle vs. Class Collaboration.

A Study of Labor Banks, the B. & O. Plan, Insurance Schemes, and "Workers' Education."

By EARL R. BROWDER.

"LABOR banking offers a peaceful way to the revolution. All talk of struggle and organization is superfluous." This was a statement made at the El Paso Convention of the A. F. of L at the close of 1924. It epitomized the whole gathering, which, supposedly representing the labor movement, really spent its entire time devising methods of betrayal, working out schemes of commercial undertakings, insurance businesses, "labor" banks, B. & O. plans, etc. El Paso was the logical next step after the declaration of class-collaboration policy at Portland, a year before, accompanied by the expulsion of William F. Dunne from the convention because he was a Communist and a fighter against this policy.

The Fundamental Issue Before the Unions.

Are the unions to be developed into fighting organizations and to be used to protect the workers against capitalist exploitation? Or are they to become an integral part of the machinery of the capitalist system and thus assist the process of exploitation in the vain hope of transforming the greedy capitalists into kindly benefactors by soft words? Are the unions to be organs of class struggle or of class collaboration?

Class collaboration is not a new idea or a new practice in the American Federation of Labor. But it has been given an entire new wardrobe. It has been dressed up in bright new clothes. It has been systematized and

organized into a comprehensive program of action and furnished with a pseudo-philosophy and economics. Under the modern conditions of acute class antagonisms, of imperialist contradictions threatening new world wars, or the breakdown of capitalist production in Europe, this makes the class collaboration program and ideology the focussing point of the whole class struggle, because it is the instrument of the capitalist class within the ranks of labor.

"The interests of capital and labor are identical." This phrase has long been the watchword of the labor bureaucrats. Under this banner they have constantly betrayed the interests of labor to capital. Since the days when Mark Hanna organized his "labor lieutenants" into the Civic Federation, collaboration with the capitalist class, the policy that made Samuel Gompers powerful, has been the settled policy of the governing circles in the American Federation of Labor. The Civic Federation made an institution of the idea, and entrenched it within the highest circles of the labor movement.

The poisonous influence of the Civic Federation upon the American labor movement, and the struggle of the rank and file against it, is a subject worthy of the efforts of a good historian. The militant sections of the labor movement revolted against it, to the extent that the largest union in the A. F. of L., the United Mine Workers, wrote a special law into its constitution directed against its president, John Mitchell, prohibiting any officer of the union from belonging to the Civic Federation. Any history of the American labor movement that does not deal fully with the influence of and the struggle against the Civic Federation will ignore one of the determining factors in events, the influence of which the initiated will find it hard to realize.

Never has there been in the past, however, an organized drive to establish special machinery for collaboration with the capitalist class on such a grand scale as we now witness in the A. F. of L. and some independent unions. All the accumulating forces of reaction in the bureaucratic officialdom of the unions has been fused into a concerted movement all along the line to bind the labor movement hand and foot, to capitalism and its institutions.

The outstanding phases of the campaign for class collaboration are: (1) Establishment of "insurance benefits" as the dominant feature of the union's daily activity; (2) The epidemic of so-called labor banks; (3) Special schemes for collaboration in the shops for reducing costs and speeding up production, such as the B. & O. plan; (4) The systematic corruption of the minds of the more intelligent workers with a philosophy of class collaboration, through the instrumentality of so-called workers' education, and (5) The welding together of the entire official apparatus under the program of class collaboration, classic exposition of which was given by Samuel Gompers and Major Geo. L. Berry at the Portland Convention of the A. F. of L.

I. Trade Unionism vs. Insurance Business.

INSURANCE departments in the unions have been an established feature from the beginnings of the labor movement. In America, as in England, many of the oldest labor unions began their career as simple benefit societies. This insurance feature of union activity, strongest among the unions of highly skilled workers, has for long been pushed into the background. To the extent that the benefit organizations were turned into unions, to that same extent the insurance features were subordinated, and made incidental to the prime functions of the class struggle.

This has been changed in a group of the most important unions in America, however, within the past few years. The railroad shop unions, with their disastrous strike dragging along and their entire fighting front broken up by the incompetence of their leaders, found the membership leaving the unions by tens of thousands. Instead of meeting the threatening situation by a renewed militancy and a program of solidarity, the officialdom resur-

rected the insurance society features as the basis for their appeal to the membership to rally to the unions.

"Insurance" became the watchword of the union organizers on the railroads. This signified the abandonment of the struggle. It was the beginning of the movement by the trade union leaders toward open collaboration with the employers. It threw a cold wet blanket upon the remaining enthusiasm in the rank and file. It was the signal of surrender, and the membership understood it as such. The effect upon the railroad shop unions was a disintegrating one.

But what do the highly-paid bureaucrats at the head of the unions care about the demoralization of the rank and file by their class collaboration schemes? Nothing. They are interested first and foremost in maintaining their own "position in society" and in continuing their fat salaries. They looked upon the failure of their insurance schemes in the typical capitalist fashion—they failed because they were not organized comprehensively enough. The cure, according to the class collaboration scheme, is to enter the insurance business on the grand scale.

From the report of a special committee investigating the question of insurance, delivered to the El Paso Convention of the A. F. of L. (1924), we find the reason for this deep interest in insurance. The bureaucrats found that investments in the insurance business bring an annual income of 70 millions of dollars, that profits in life insurance average 20 per cent, and fire insurance profits run from 100 per cent to more than 1,000 per cent. So the committee recommended, and the El Paso Convention endorse, the following proposition:

"It is fully conceded that the insurance business is the safest, surest, and most simple of control and management of all present commercial enterprises. We heartily endorse the principle involved and recommend that the national and international trade union offices study carefully the report of the special committee on this subject. It is further recommended that the President of the

American Federation of Labor be authorized and directed to call a voluntary conference of all national and international officers within the coming year, for such action on this important proposal as shall appeal to the best judgment of those attending."

So, accepting the failure of the attempt to reduce the unions to their former primitive state as benefit societies, the bureaucrats controlling the highest offices in the labor movement have decided—to use the same idea of life insurance, but in the more up-to-date fashion of going directly into the business on capitalist lines, thus turning the labor unions into auxiliaries of the banking interests that control the insurance business, in return for a share in the profits.

II. Labor Banks as Substitutes for Labor Unions.

THE mania for labor banks began about the same time, and for the same reasons, as the first attempts to revive the insurance features of the unions. With the unions disintegrating, and the income from per-capita tax dropping at a terrific rate, the job-holders in the union offices frantically cast about for new sources of income. The kindly Providence that looks after the interests of labor fakers in distress inspired the idea of labor banks.

At the El Paso Convention it was reported that 30 such labor banks are now operating, with resources totalling $150,000,000, while about 60 more are in process of organization. They are participated in by most of the unions independent and A. F. of L., although the organizational initiative has come mainly from the railroad and needle trades unions. It will be impossible to deal with this multiplicity of organizations and all their peculiarities in this little pamphlet, but some of the best known of them can be characterzed quite definitely, and the most important tendencies of the labor bank movement made clear.

Probably the best known is the bank of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, headed by Warren S.

Stone. This is but one of the many ventures into the field of finance and industry made by Warren S. Stone with the treasury of the Locomotive Engineers' Union. Another is the mining field in West Virginia, about which Stone has engaged in a bitter controversy with the Uited Mine Workers of America, because he has refused to recognize the miners' union.

Warren Stone, through this "labor bank," has become one of the directors of the Empire Trust Co. of New York, one of the units of the Money Trust of America. He is warmly received in banking circles, and applauded for his "sound business judgment," for his conservative union policy, and for his general harmony with his banking associates. This particular "labor bank" has accumulated close to $50,000,000 deposits; rumor has it that a considerable part of this comes from the Henry Ford interests, although this cannot be definitely verified. What is definitely established is that the bank has tied up the affairs of the Locomotive Engineers with the machinery of Wall Street so closely that it is questionable if it should still be called a labor union.

The next best known labor bank is the Amalgamated Trust and Savings Bank of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. This one is the single bank of the whole swarm that has been tinged with any real proletarian atmosphere, which it gained through the fact that its initiation was under the same general policy which launched the Russian-American Industrial Corporation for participation in the reconstruction of the Soviet Russian garment industry. It quickly shed it working-class tendencies, however, and is now little different from the other labor banks.

The Amalgamated Clothing Workers' officials, at the time of launching their bank, were following a policy distinctly a step to the left of the American labor movement as a whole. Right-wing influences were even then struggling to bring the union into line with the reactionary A. F. of L. officialdom, and have succeeded to a considerable degree in the year 1924. There is no doubt

that the bank was a factor in swinging the administration away from their left orientation and establishing unquestioned class collaboration as the official policy of the union. The Russian-American Industrial Corporation was neglected and allowed to lie undeveloped, while the bank turned away from co-operation with the revolutionary Russian workers to the more lucrative collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

During the recent convention of the Machinists' Union in Detroit (1924) it was brought out by anti-administration delegates that the Mount Vernon Savings Bank, supposed to be a "labor bank" because it was launched by means of the union treasury, is in the hands of outside private interests to the extent of 51 per cent of its stock. Its policy is so completely at war with even the mildest conception of unionism, that during the presidential election, while Johnston, president of the union, was the principal labor backer of LaFollette, the Mount Vernon Bank sent out a circular ridiculing the LaFollette campaign, and supporting Coolidge for president. When called to account for this, Davidson, secretary of the union, explained that this circular was "merely copied from a standard circular sent out by the National City Bank of New York" (center of the Rockefeller-Morgan financial combine).

A prize specimen of labor bank is that started in Cincinnati by the Railway Clerks' Union. The first large deposit in this "labor bank," amounting to $50,000, was made by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company. The profits from this bank that go to uphold the decaying official machine of the clerks' union are made from the money deposited by the railroad corporations against which the union is supposed to be fighting. It is easy to imagine just how much militancy can be expected from a union leadership that depends for its revenue on the day-to-day good will of the railroad corporations.

Labor banks are developing an elaborate public propaganda, circulated especially among businessmen, to justify their existence—from the point of view of the

businessmen. The loudest note sounded in this propaganda is, that labor banks make the workers good and contented slaves, soothe discontent, prevent the spread of Bolshevism, and "help business" generally. A sample of this propaganda is seen in the story, widely syndicated in the Hearst Press, given out by H. V. Boswell, vice-president of the Engineers' bank in New York. It says, among other things:

"Who wants to be a Bolshevik when he can be a capitalist instead? We have shown how to mix oil and water; how to reconcile capital and labor. Instead of standing on a corner soapbox, screaming with rage because the capitalists own real estate, bank accounts and automobiles, the engineer has turned in and become a capitalist himself. Now it stands to reason, doesn't it, that such men won't start any movement to destroy property or ruin big business? Why, only last spring we bought a substantial interest in the Empire Trust Company of New York City. If you could have seen Schwab, Heckscher, and the locomotive engineers seated around the directors' table, you'd have recognized the whole scene as an entirely new turn in what used to be called the 'fight' between capital and labor."

Without question the "fight" between capital and labor will be stopped by the labor banks—to the degree that the labor banks succeed in subordinating labor to capital. It is already an established policy, boasted about in labor conventions, that labor banks will have nothing to do with strikes, because strikes are "unprofitable."

The Brotherhood of Railway Carmen is a union headed by Martin F. Ryan, a man who demonstrated his "financial genius" by building up a treasury of several million dollars for the organization by refusing to pay strike benefits to the striking members of the union. He built a new kind of labor bank—a private institution, but built with the money of the union of which he is the head. The Carmen have lost most of their members as a result of Ryan's union policies, dropping from about 300,000 members to less than 35,000. But they continue to pay

per capita to the A. F. of L. on about 100,000 out of the profits of their president's private bank!

We can make the positive conclusion, on the basis of what we know about the labor banks, that they are designed to bolster up a failing officialdom or to make a powerful bureaucracy still more independent of the rank and file membership. That is their essential characteristic. They are instruments of class collaboration. They remove the unions further from the rank and file. They enormously increase the power of the bankrupt officials. They lay the unions helpless before the financial interests. They have no independent strength of their own at all. They are make-shift expedients to lengthen the tenure of office of union leaders unable to make good in the wage and hour struggle. They constitute a menace to the labor movement, and are part and parcel of the campaign for class collaboration in the American unions.

III. The "B. & O. Plan" for Destroying Unionism.

ARISING out of the same bankruptcy of leadership which gave birth to the new insurance schemes, the labor banks, etc., has come the infamous "Baltimore and Ohio Plan" of class collaboration. Originated by O. S. Beyer, Jr., an efficiency engineer who worked in the arsenals during the war for the Government, this scheme was "sold" to Wm. H. Johnston, president of the machinists' union, as the means of getting the union on the good side of the railroad corporations, avoiding such unpleasant things as strikes, and insuring a steady flow of per capita tax to the union offices.

Writing in November, 1923, about this plan, at the time when it received its first public announcement, the author of this pamphlet pointed out the true nature of this scheme of linking up the unions with the companies, in an article which was later distributed as a leaflet throughout the railroad industry to the number of more than a hundred thousand copies. The railroad workers were quick to see the menace of the B. & O. Plan, and a wide-

spread revolt against it has become a basic issue in the metal and railroad industries for the left wing. Just as this pamphlet is being written, news comes that the machinists' local union of the Glenwood Shops, B. & O. Railroad, where the scheme has been in operation for two years, have condemned it root and branch. This is sufficient proof that the left wing agitation against the B. & O. Plan has been solidly based in the needs of the railroad workers.

What is this plan that has earned so much praise from the capitalist, and aroused such a storm of resentment among the workers? It is an agreement whereby the union purchases recognition from railroad management by supplying efficiency engineers, who, with the authority of the union behind them, speed up production, eliminate waste, reduce the cost of production, and eliminate "undesirable workers" and union working rules that hamper efficiency in profit making.

The unions of the railroad shopmen will, if the B. & O. Plan is not rejected by the workers, soon become adjuncts of the administrations of the various roads and their days as militant organizations of the workers come to a close.

The first public announcement of the "co-operation" plans was made by Wm. H. Johnston at a meeting in the Y. M. C. A., St. Louis, and reported in Labor, the railroad weekly, of November 24th, 1923. Mr. Johnston proposed (and he spoke for most of the officials of the shop unions) that the unions should become efficiency auxiliaries to the companies, promising the corporations greater profits from union labor than they could squeeze from non-union labor, in return for recognition of the union.

The scheme is called the B. & O. Plan because it was first tried out on the B. & O. Railroad. The unions hire efficiency experts to show the bosses how to get more work out of their members. "The idea underlying our service to the Baltimore and Ohio," said Mr. Johnstone, "may be compared to the idea which underlies the engineering services extended to railroads by large supply corpora-

tions which have contracts with these railroads to furnish, let us say, arch-brick, superheaters, stokers or lubricating oil." The union, in short, becomes a supply corporation to the railroad companies, engaged in the business of selling labor just as another corporation may sell lubricants. It competes, in the market, like any other commodity-selling organization, and engages to deliver more work for less cost than non-union labor can deliver. That is the essence of the scheme.

The effect of this proposition, if established throughout the railroad industry, will be to eliminate unionism altogether. It is a method for the railroad employers to capture the railroad unions and turn them to profit-making purposes. It is a direct competitor of the "company unions," promising the bosses that it will be more effective for them than even such organizations formed by their paid agents.

Johnston says on this point: "I want to emphasize as strongly as I know how the fact that in the task of positive co-operation in the railroad industry there can be no substitute for the unions of the railroad employees." And later: "I maintain that such a management would never again, as long as it retains its good sense, desire to see the affiliated shop crafts effaced from the scheme of things on its roads."

The "open shop" drive is to be stopped, in other words, by eliminating everything from the unions that the bosses don't like. Make the unions just the kind of organizations that the employers want, make the unions profitable to the capitalists rather than to the workers, and then "it follows as night the day" that there will be no conflict with the employers. It is all so simple!

The prime motive for action of the reactionary officialdom of the shop unions, is the desire to remain "leaders" with secure and comfortable positions. They were afraid to put up a real fight against the railroads, but were forced by a militant rank and file to go along with the shopmen's strike of 1922. They sabotaged the struggle, however, by complete failure to have any centralized

plans of battle, an entire absence of commissary or relief organization, and not the slightest move for unity of the railroad men generally for the struggle. After the failure of the strike they became panic-stricken at the result of their handiwork—because it threatened to lose them their positions.

The one measure that could save the situation—amalgamation of the railroad unions—they would have nothing of. They tried to reorganize the unions with the "selling talk" of insurance salesmen, boosting the insurance and fraternal features of the unions. This miserably failed. The officialdom, bankrupt, because afraid of every really progressive measure, had but one place left to go—to the employers. And there they went. "Co-operation" with the management is the result.

It is no miracle that the capitalist press has greeted Johnston's proposals as "statesmanlike," and have joyously announced a new era of fraternity between workers and capitalists. They may well rejoice, for, if such institutions of class collaboration can be successfully set up, with the aid of Johnston and Co., it means that the labor movement is hamstrung for some time to come. The capitalists should smile, because this "co-operation" is the co-operation of the lion with the lamb, with the railroad companies in their usual role of lion. That a section of the labor press should echo the pleasure of Wall Street is another demonstration of the complete muddle-headedness or corruption of the dominating leadership of the American labor movement.

The capitalist press greeted the B. & O. Plan with as much joy as the railroad companies had done. And they printed facts about it to show why they liked the idea. This testimony of the capitalist press is enough to prove that the plan is poison to unionism and meat for the exploiters.

"The leaders persuaded the inexperienced workers to waive their seniority rights. Can you beat that for co-operation."

This is one of the high points of an article in "Collier's

Weekly," July 5th, 1924, extolling the B. & O. Plan. It throws a vivid light upon what the plan means for the workers. One of the features is the methods it provides for using the "leaders" of the workers to persuade them to give up their seniority rights whenever these stand in the way of higher profits.

"If one of 'em so much as slows down before the whistle blows," brags a foreman about his workers under the B. & O. Plan, "you get a box of cigars. And three minutes before startin' time, you'll find 'em with their aprons on, just a-rarin' to go!" This, from a booster for the scheme, should rouse serious thought among union men. Speed-up systems are fine for profits, but what do they mean for workers? Another line or two from this "boost" for Johnston's plan will reveal something else that it means!

"It is through such leaders that several groups of workers have asked their foremen to discharge workers who prove unfriendly to the new plan or **unable to keep the pace** which the gang has set for itself. And, mind you, not one of these gangs is working by piece rate!"

So! The unions are changed into instruments to force forement to **discharge the workers unable to keep the pace.** What a wonderful recommendation of the plan for the railroad workers generally! How the railroad capitalists should love this plan! But why should the workers enjoy it?

Boosters for the plan inside the machinists' union have been telling about how it would give the workers a "democratic" representation in the management. Does it? "Collier's" describes the "democracy" in these words:

"When somebody says: 'Well, Uncle Daniel Willard, says it's so-and-so,' that's where the argument stops." This "Uncle Dan" is president of the B. & O. railway. He has the last word. So long as the plan means speeding up, lower costs, more work, discharge of workers by their fellows, diversion, disruption, suspicion, and decay of the union, which this rotten class-collaboration spells for the workers, wherever it is put into effect, "Uncle

Dan" will smile and give his approval. But if the workers should take their "democracy" seriously, and ask for an increase in wages—"that's where the argument stops."

IV. Educating the Workers to Collaboration.

It has been evident to the bureaucratic officials of the trade unions that it was necessary for them to overcome the instinctive reaction of the workers against the various collaboration schemes, especially in their newer and more brazen forms. To this end there has been built up a vast machinery of "education," to overcome the "prejudices" of the rank and file. This gigantic plot to poison the minds of the workers goes under the pleasant name of "Workers' Education."

The long-established class-collaboration policy of the officialdom of the labor movement in America has, in the past, been of a rough, rule-of-thumb nature, based upon temporary expedients to meet immediate situations. Thus it has been possible for these unions, despite the character of their leadership, to develop tremendous mass struggles against the capitalist class, by the cumulative pressure of mass demands. The old bureaucrats, with their crude and unintelligent methods, could not organize their betrayal on a long-time and systematic basis. They were too stupid to completely choke the unions.

What we see, however, in the so-called workers' education movement, is the combination of a keen, middle-class intellectualism with the old-time bureaucracy of the trade unions, which threatens to render the new class collaborationism much more deadly than the old.

Acting as the official center of the movement is the Workers' Education Bureau, in which Matthew Woll is the political commissar of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy (with the able assistance of such stalwarts as John P. Frey).

The watchword of this institution is, in the words of its technical director, Spencer Miller, "The power of labor consists in its power to serve, and not to dominate." To keep labor in the position of servitude, to discourage

all ideas of labor as the dominating power in society—these are the positive and negative sides of the mission of the Workers' Education Bureau, the center of class-collaborationist education in America. As a symbol of its subservient attitude toward the capitalist ruling class, its directors have, in the 1934 year-book issued by them, placed in a prominent position a fac-simile of a letter from Alfred E. Smith, Tammany Governor of New York State.

Affiliated with the Workers' Education Bureau, but supposedly representing a more "radical" tendency, is the Brookwood School, a resident labor college for aspiring youngsters in the labor movement. This institution had a sincere desire, when it started, to keep out of the clutches of the reactionary officialdom of the trade unions. But, alas, the struggle was too hard, and it is more and more taking on the same color as the Bureau. The 1934 summer courses signified a long step toward complete acceptance of the class collaboration ideal of "education." It was no accident that there was included a special course on the B. & O. Plan, by its technical father, O. H. Beyer, Jr., designed to train agents to go out and "sell" the plan to the workers.

Text Books of Slavery.

In the process of educating the workers to accept class collaboration, the Workers' Education Bureau is issuing text-books. The heart of their philosophy, the purpose of their work, is discovered in one of these, The Control of Wages, written by Walton Hamilton and Stacy May. It is a text-book of slavery. It is intellectual poison for the working class.

Cleverly written and avoiding much of the dry and humorless style usual in such books, the philosophy of class collaboration that it contains is all the more dangerous to the labor movement. It bears the same relation to trade union theory that the collaboration schemes of Wm. H. Johnston & Co. bear to the trade union practice. It amounts in substance to an elaborate scheme of justification in the language of economic

science for the prostitution of labor unionism to the function of efficiency auxiliaries to capitalism. The hope is held out, as bait upon the class collaboration hook, that by these means the labor unions may raise the prevailing standard of wages.

The fundamental thesis of Hamilton and May is contained in the following words. "It will be well to remember that there are only two ways in which the material welfare of the laborer can be increased. One is at the expense of other groups in the community; the other through an increase of the wealth out of which all income is paid. The first of these has a very definite limit . . . If it is overdone . . . it defeats it own end. The second of these, an attempt to get more out of resources (through increased efficiency and technical improvements), has flexible limits."

Throughout the book grave warnings of disaster and disappointment are given to those workers who would increase wages at the expense of property incomes, while the smooth broad road to comfort and affluence for all workers is described in proposals for increasing the product of industry. The class struggle is anathema; the key to wages is class collaboration. Such is the message of the Workers' Education Bureau and its text book on wages.

It is worth while to give a passing critical glance at the quality of the economic "education" that this book provided, checking it up with known facts of American industry and with the fundamental economics taught by Karl Marx.

Relations Between Production and Wages.

What is the answer of American experience to the question of whether increased production is a source of increased wages? Hamilton and May themselves give figures (pp. 145-146) which belie the conclusions of their argument. Production increased in the United States from 1899 to 1920 by approximately 30 per cent per capita; but during the same period real wages, instead of increasing by any part of the increased production,

actually declined to an extent variously estimated at from 10 per cent to 30 per cent. It is hard to obtain any comfort for the class collaborationists from those stubborn facts.

What has American experience to say as to the effectiveness of improved industrial technique in raising wage rates? According to the theory of Hamilton and May, the most highly organized and mechanized industries should pay the highest wages. A casual comparison between wages in the steel industry, where organization and the machine process are developed to a high degree, with those in the building industry which, although rapidly undergoing the same transformation, is still, for various reasons, far behind steel, shows that the collaborationist theory is not supported by the existing facts.

A Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, December, 1923, shows the average wage of workers in the steel industry, for one particular week, to be approximately $5.00 per day; while the Monthly Labor Review, of the Bureau, for December, 1923, shows the wage rates in the building trades for all the large cities, which together comprise the bulk of the building workers, to range from $8.00 to $13.00 per day. It is a matter of common knowledge that the latter enjoy infinitely better working conditions, have more control of their jobs, etc. The building trades workers have shorter hours and receive higher wages than do the workers in the steel industry. Improved technique has not been a source of increased wages.

The above facts are convincing testimony that increased production and development of technique have no tendency to increase wages. It might be argued with more plausibility that the opposite of the collaborationist theory is true. Either statement of the case, however, ignores the fundamental factors that determine wages, both as discovered by theoretical analysis and direct observation. It is as incorrect for the workers to expect increased wages by increased output under the capitalist system, as it would be for them to go upon the opposite theory and attempt to limit production and prevent

technical progress for the purpose of increasing wages.

The pitiful attempt to make class collaboration policies appear to be sound in economic theory, which was made by Wm. H. Johnston in his speech before a gathering of railroad executives in St. Louis, has already been mentioned. His statement "that the idea underlying our service may be compared to the idea which underlies the engineering service extended to the railroads by large supply corporations which have contracts with these railroads to furnish, let us say, arch-brick, superheaters, stokers or lubricating oil," is a clumsy attempt to hook up his vicious scheme with current notions of economics. It attempts to make class collaboration appear as good "selling tactics" on the labor market. But the argument fails even more miserably than the others.

This intellectual rubbish should be contrasted with the solid explanations of Marx in order to get the full measure of the worthlessness of the class collaborationist theories.

The Marxian Theory of Wages.

"Wages are determined by the same law which regulates the price of any other commodity," said Marx (Wage-Labor and Capital, Kerr Edition, p. 19). The principle is elaborately worked out in Capital, being a fundamental of the Marxian theory of value. "The price of a commodity is determined by the duration of the labor required for its manufacture." In the case of the commodity "labor power," the price (wage) is determined by the amount of labor required to produce (and reproduce) it. This is subject to variation from the barest subsistence, or less, to the comparative comfort of small sections of workers, according to the technical requirements of the labor process, the immediate supply and demand, the general level of technology, etc., but above all to the **organized social and industrial power** of the workers to withhold their labor-power from the market until they receive a certain standard of living.

The only effective point of attack for the workers, in their efforts to control wages, is thus clearly seen to

be their organized power, used in struggle with the employers. To attempt to find, in the examination of labor-power as a commodity, any justification for the Johnston scheme of increasing the productivity of labor-power, **as a policy for the raising of wages,** under capitalism, is absurd. To propose to increase the price of labor-power, by increasing its productivity, which in turn increases the available supply in relation to the demand of industry, while the control of the supply by its sellers is weakened—such a proposition is a caricature of economic theory that scarcely requires refutation.

When the collaborationists point out that wages are generally higher in those countries with a highly-developed machine industry, than in countries where primitive methods prevail, they think they have scored a smashing argument that "labor can afford to lead in the popular drive for more production." No such conclusion is warranted by an examination of the matter. Higher wages in countries of machine production, as compared with countries of handicraft industry, have the same meaning, so far as wages and their control go, as the figures for equipment repairs and maintenance, plus the difference caused by the greater capability and opportunity for organization of the workers under machine industry. Repairs and maintenance as well as wages are higher in the one country than in the other, and the fundamental reason in each case is the same. Maintenance costs are higher for a steam-engine than for a hand-loom, and the labor-maintenance cost is higher for a steam-engine operator than for a hand-loom operator. Neither has any necessary relation to the **volume** of production. Both are incidental to the technical requirements of the particular industry, and both decrease pro rata with the increase of production upon a given level of technical culture in the absence of compensating factors, **such as the organized power of the workers.**

These class collaboration theories, together with the vicious practices that naturally flow from them, serve the interests of the employing class and the union

bureaucracy, but their effect upon the working class is disastrous. Its fighting spirit, as well as its ability to put up an effective fight, are gradually and subtly undermined. The unions are transformed, step by step, into "production departments," and the authority of capitalist administration begins to reach over from the workshop into the union hall. Labor, as an independent power, fighting the encroachments of predatory capitalism, and jealously protecting the interests of the workers, is eliminated from industry. Class collaboration is fatal to militant labor organization.

Not only does this pernicious doctrine sap the strength of the trade unions but at the same time it increases the fighting power of the employers. How ridiculous it is to tell the workers that their wages are to be increased through improvements in the technique of production, when all about them they see that it is precisely the most highly mechanized industries that have eliminated all effective labor unionism and used the higher technique to intensify exploitation of the workers. The steel trust is a classic example, not to speak of the textile trust, the automobile combines, the rubber industry and others. Every advance in the technique of industry is accompanied by concentration of capital, which is immediately transformed into more militant and effective warfare upon the workers' organizations.

Control of wages is indeed a vital problem to the working class. But we have seen that the text book of the class collaborationists has contributed nothing more than confusion to the solution of it. Unfortunately there is no broad, well-lighted boulevard that leads the workers to that much-desired goal. It can be reached only by organization and struggle. All the attempts of the apostles of class-peace, class-collaboration, and social reformism, to lead the workers away from the inevitable fight are, in result if not in intention, gross betrayals of the interests of the working class. Control of wages is to be obtained only through control of the whole process of production, which in turns calls for the control of government. Every specific wage is to be increased only

by organization and struggle in the shops; the general wage is to be controlled only through the widest political organization and struggle of the whole working class. Class struggle, and not class collaboration, leads to the emancipation of the toiling masses. And to effectively carry on the class struggle the workers must reject the poisonous "economics" of the collaborationists and their whole system of ideas.

Collaboration Under the Cloak of Socialism.

Latest recruits to the advocates of collaboration of the working class with capitalism, along the lines of the B. & O. Plan, labor banks, etc., are the erstwhile Intercollegiate Socialists, now the "industrial democrats," who publish an organ called **Labor Age**. The group consists of well-intentioned, educated, and more or less religious, young men and women from the middle class who are quite determined, come what may, that Labor shall be elevated, made "self-respecting," given some "control," and generally brought up to their own high level of culture.

It would be ungenerous not to preface a cold blooded examination of the objective functions of such groups as that gathered about the **Labor Age** with an appreciation of their good intentions. They mean well. They are overflowing with love for their oppressed fellow men. They are bursting with desire to help the world out of a bad fix. Many of them are admirable persons, generous to a fault, keenly intelligent within specialized fields, and withall, quite pleasing folk with whom to spend an idle hour.

Unfortunately, however, the actual life of the world runs along upon another plane entirely from that inhabited by this middle-class intelligentzia. With the result that, entering into practical affairs of the labor movements, these advocates of "industrial democracy" become tools of the most sinister influences at work within the trade unions of America today. This is glaringly illustrated in the **Labor Age** for March, 1924, which is devoted to eulogizing Johnston's scheme for turning the

unions over to the bosses, daubing it over with the pink paint of "workers' participation in management" to make it more attractive, or to use another metaphor, coating the poisonous pill of class collaboration with sugary arguments of "industrial democracy." The result upon these immature minds unable to pierce through to reality is complete confusion, delivering them helpless before the agents of capitalism, the official bureaucracy of the trade unions.

"If Labor hopes to get control of industry, it must learn how to conduct management as a group. This gives the opportunity." Yes, Labor must learn to manage industry, but how? Your answer, dear 'democratic" children, does not answer. Because you have twisted the problem exactly hind-end-to, you have headed yourselves straight into the capitalist camp.

The only correct statement of the problem of workers' control, is: "If Labor hopes to learn how to conduct management as a group, it must get control of industry." The way to learn management is to manage; to manage presupposes first control: the only way to control is to build up strong and powerful industrial unions closely united with a powerful and militant political organization. The pitiful "control" the collaborationists propose, works in the opposite direction, eating the heart out of unionism.

Corruption of Progressives.

It would be hardly worth while to give special attention to **Labor Age**, the arguments of which are mostly echoes of the official propaganda, but for the article therein by E. J. Lever. Brother Lever is a progressive who, in the past, has stood staunchly for amalgamation. Now he has swallowed the collaboration bait, but is busy trying to reconcile it with a "militant program" and with amalgamation. Beyer has aroused Lever's "creative instinct," with the result that capitalist control is forgotten; Lever is already dreaming that he works under a proletarian system where the problem is no longer one of struggle against the capitalist class, but of building up the indus-

tries by the workers.

There is no doubt that the engineer Beyer would be very valuable man for the railroad workers—where they were actually in control of the railroads, for instance, in Russia; and if he could be induced to serve the working class when it is in control as well as he now serves the capitalist class. But the "socialist" union politician Beyer is a very corrupting influence for the railroad workers in America where the workers are only taking the first feeble steps toward power. Corruption is the only word that descibes a process that transforms Brother Lever, militant progressive and advocate of amalgamation, into apologist for the poisonous collaboration scheme of Wm. H. Johnston.

Do you know, Brother Lever, that the Fascist movement in Italy began to come to power at the moment when the Italian unions gave up militant struggle for a promise of "factory committees" whereby they could learn the "technique and management of industry?" Where are the Italian workers today? The German unions gave up the revolution for the **Arbeitsgemeinschaften**-(equivalent to the Johnston scheme, on a vaster scale), but today their unions are destroyed and even the **Arbeitsgemeinschaften** are taken away. More than a year ago the German workers had become so disillusioned that they voted, over the opposition of the entire officialdom, to withdraw from participation in the class collaboration scheme. These were Social-Democratic workmen, not Communists. And do you know, Brother Lever, that in addition to the usual capitalist influences in our unions today, there is also developing a definite Fascist tendency among the higher officials? You should know these things, and you should also know that by endorsing the Johnston scheme you are indirectly supporting every influence in American trade unionism that would destroy our organizations as the Italian and German trade unions are being destroyed.

The masses of union members in the railroad and metal industries, where the collaboration schemes are being pushed, are just beginning to take stock after

terrible defeats in struggle against the bosses. They are tired and discouraged. They are sick of the old tactics and leadership that brought disaster, and they demand a change. Progressives and revolutionaries have been received with acclaim by great audiences, when the presented the program of amalgamation, industrial unionism, militant leadership, political action through a revolutionary class party, and all the measures that alone can lead forward from defeat toward victory. More than half the membership of the railroad unions have demanded amalgamation as the result of this great campaign.

But the officials are sabotaging amalgamation. They are cleverly endeavoring to turn the weariness and disillusionment of the masses into the channels of class collaboration. They sing the siren songs of "industrial peace," under a scheme where the workers will get all they want without fighting for it. Of course the workers do not want to fight if they can obtain their demands otherwise. And a few of them, even such intelligent men as Brother Lever, fall under the influence of the collaboration soothing syrup when it is given in a "Socialist" bottle. They run away from the fight, not realizing that they are preparing for themselves, and for the whole labor movement, a struggle a thousand times more bitter when the working class finally awakens to find itself betrayed, and helpless in the hands of the capitalists.

V. The Struggle Against Class Collaboration Is a Struggle for Revolutionary Leadership.

LET the rank and file workers within the trade unions make no mistake about this—there is no middle of the road course between the demoralizing, disruptive, disastrous policies of collaboration with the capitalist class, on the one hand, and the path of revolutionary class struggle on the other.

Our movement has had experience with the timid progressives," who in words are loudly against the reactionary leaders, but who, when a decisive moment arrives, turn

and run. In reality such progressives, if they deserve the name, are camouflaged followers and servants of the most reactionary officialdom. Progress from the trade unions towards greater power for the working class can never come from such people. But their role is the inevitable one for all who seek a half-way course. The issue is between the revolutionary class struggle or reactionary class collaboration. Every worker must make his choice.

A sample of the so-called progressive attitude to the problems of the labor movement which brings this out clearly is found in an article by Benjamin Stolberg, printed in Hearst's International for March (1924), entitled "The Mouse That Frightens Hughes," wherein he reflects the position of the trade union's timid progressives. He comes to the conclusion that the left wing has done "irreparable damage to the American labor movement by driving all the liberals and progressives in it under cover of the official oligarchy." This is interesting, if true, and as the judgment is not confined to Brother Stolberg. nor original with him, it may be worth while to examine its validity.

Brother Ben has a superficial keenness in observing facts, and a certain honesty in setting down some of them, that is commendable. Who, for example, could better describe what has happened with our timid progressives than does Ben, when he points out that they are all getting "under cover of the official oligarchy?" And how many of them are honest enough to admit it? Stolberg's article, therefore, has some merit in these respects, even though on the whole it records a contemptible cowardice on the part of the "progressives" and liberals in the American labor movement.

It is true that most of the so-called progressives have run to cover of the official oligarchy. They have frantically broken away from all commitments not 100 per cent "official." Some of them have even gone Wm. J. Burns a point better in denouncing the left wing. They have been frightened by something, quite evidently, and Stolberg says the red-flag-waving and Bolshevik ritual is the mouse that caused our "progressives" to run to

Mamma Gompers' arms. If that were true, it would constitute a most damning indictment of the progressives; it would convict them of an immaturity, a timidity of shadows, that would make all their pretensions profoundly ridiculous.

It is not true, however, that the panic-stricken progressives are running away from shadows. Stolberg maligns them. They are frightened of **reality**, the first peep at which was given them when they saw the left wing militants actually fighting for the things the "progressives" had talked for. Suddenly it was apparent that Amalgamation, and other mild measures of progress, could easily be achieved by those who said they were for them, provided only a little fighting spirit was displayed, with a willingness to accept a leading and responsible part by the progressives. But it meant a real break, not the old platonic sham-battle, with the Gompers bureaucracy. The glimpse of reality was too much for the progressives; they ran shrieking in fear back to the maternal shelter. They never meant really to get away from home; they were only out for an evening's lark, for a bit of harmless sporting, with everything perfectly respectable the next day. They could not bear to be taken seriously.

There is one fundamental trouble with these progressive friends of ours—they want progress only if they can get it for nothing. They will not pay any price for it. In fact, they become as indignant at a suggestion of risking anything in a fight, as they do at a suggestion that they are not genuine progressives. But sadly it must be recorded, that these timid progressives are not progressives at all. Always, when they come up squarely against a situation that calls for decision and action, the only real test of progressivism, they halt, waver, and run away. They fly to the "cover of the official oligarchy." They make the same decision that Ben Stolberg makes in his article: "Gompers is right." Their progressivism is a fake.

There must be, however, a deeper reason for the

wholesale flight of the progressive chickens to Gomper's sheltering wings, other than merely a fear-reaction away from the primitive stirrings of the rank and file and away from all positive action. That more fundamental explanation is to be found in the growing bitterness of the class struggle, in the crisis now developing within the entire capitalist system, which draws the class lines ever tighter. Our "progressives," who are now progressing backward, do not want to be on either side of the barricade; they want to be on friendly terms with the whole world; but the fight has grown too hot, so they choose—capitalism and its agents in the persons of Gompers, Lewis, et al.

Stolberg merely voices the infantile judgment of this whole class of progressives, when he sides with Lewis against the left wing of the Miners' Union. The progressive Committee was organized in the U. M. W. A., he complains, although that is already an industrial union; but the left wing "hates and distrusts the ruthless tactics of President Lewis. This reason is as inadequate as it is foolhardy, for Lewis is a bad man to be against."

Brother Stolberg should know (if he does not) that the left wing is not against Lewis because he is ruthless—it is because he is ruthless against the militant membership of his own union but soft as mush to the coal operators. It is because he ruthlessly adopts the employers' program of exterminating 200,000 members of his own union, while he softly whispers his confidences into the ears of the Civic Federation, President Coolidge, and Wm. J. Burns. "Lewis is a bad man to be against," says Stolberg, and his liberal friends approve. Gary is a bad man to be against also, but if one is not against Gary then one is against the steel workers; and if the left wing is not against Lewis, then it is against the best fighters in the miners' organizations, against Howat, McLachlan, the West Virginia militants, the battlers of Fayette County, the unionists of Herrin. Lewis uses the same argument: "The Coal Kings are bad men to be against," and so he joins them. The timid progressives

may be willing to allow Lewis to sell out the industrial union of the miners, and to crush the militant rank and file, but the real progressives within the United Mine Workers will spit upon such progressivism.

Inner-Union Struggle Is the Class Struggle.

Struggle between the official oligarchy at the head of the trade unions and the militant section of the membership is becoming more bitter, not because anyone has decreed that it be so, but because the struggle between the working class and the capitalist class is becoming more intense. Unemployment is increasingly entering American industry again, and with it comes the pressure by the employers to rescue wages, destroy union safeguards, and break down unionism generally. The official oligarchy in the unions is more than ever afraid of struggle against the employers, because the membership is more conscious of its interests than before; the officials are more than ever subservient to the employers, because they are more afraid of the rank and file. As a result; in almost every industry where unemployment is being felt, the union officialdom is giving way to the employers.

It is precisely in the mining industry and the needle trades that unemployment is most felt today. It is in these two industries that the officials are surrendering most to the employers. That is the reason, which Stolberg cannot see, why the left wing is more active in these two "advanced" sections of the labor movement than in other more backward one; with the added stimulus that the membership of the needle trades and coal mining are the most active and class-conscious sections of the working class. The inner-union struggle is a primary fact in the class struggle, because the workers find it impossible to attack the employing class while the union bureaucracy stands in the way. If the official oligarchy protects capitalism against the workers, then the class struggle will inevitably find its first

expression in struggle against this union officialdom and its treachery.

Headquarters of Reaction.

The convention of the American Federation of Labor at El Paso marked the consolidation and extension of the new, modernized, up-to-date schemes of class collaboration, the groundwork for which had been thoroughly laid at Portland the year before. The death of Gompers will not change the policies he formulated. At the Portland Convention of the A. F. of L. the final official blessings had been given to the whole drive for systematic collaboration with the capitalists. Samuel Gompers, John L. Lewis, and Major Berry were the spokesmen, the first with his proclamation for "industrial democracy," the second with the program of war upon the militants, and the third with his notorious four points. Gompers' statement is a suave and oily repudiation of the trade union struggle, with the kernel of meaning hidden beneath a coating of soft words. Berry's four points are a bold and brutal statement that the unions are to be subordinated to the claims of capitalist private property.

Fresh from the battle in New York where Berry had crushed the Pressmen's strike on the daily newspapers, this doughty American Legionist walked into the A. F. of L. Convention where he was hailed as a conquering hero. What was the meaning of Berry's acts in New York and the stormy enthusiasm of his welcome at Portland? Berry quickly disclosed it. He spoke, and the keynote of his speech was this:

"We stand for four great principles governing industry. These are the ownership of property, an adequate return on investment, an adequate sum allowed industry for the matter of deterioration, and that all workers including managers get proper compensation for what they put into industry."

John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, was another keynote speaker in this official gathering of the collaborators with the employing class. Speaking

after a period when the U. M. W. of A. had found its very existence threatened by the employers, the whole speech of Lewis was an appeal for the official program of collaboration. Lewis boasted of his destruction of the Kansas Union, District 14, and the expulsion of Howat. He prided himself upon assisting the British Empire Steel Corporation to break the strike in Nova Scotia, on the ground of sacredness of contracts, ignoring the fact that even his sacred contract was not violated there. He was another living symbol, through his obedience to the orders of BESCO in Nova Scotia, of the newly-consolidated program of collaboration.

Gompers' manifesto was more discreet than the utterances of his rough-neck lieutenants, but its meaning was just as definite. A few quotations will outline the entire policy, and show how it links together all these various chains in the campaign for complete subordination of the unions to capitalism. The following are key sentences from the manifesto:

"We feel the hour has struck for a pronouncement of the aims of labor that shall more nearly express the full implications of trade unionism than has yet been undertaken. . . . The close of the war marked for us a turning point in human relations, and threw into bold relief the inadequacy of existing forms and institutions. . . . Through the muddling conflict of groups (workers vs. capitalists.—Ed.) who still find it impossible to come together in co-operation, we must look to a future that must have it foundation upon co-operation and collaboration. . . . Trade unionism must lead the way even at the cost of being branded as reactionary."

Masses Swing to Left, Officialdom to Right.

The superficial observer of events in the labor movement judges from the facts above recited and countless others of a similar nature, that the labor movement is becoming more and more reactionary, that the masses are being brought under the control of capitalism more and more completely than ever before. Such a judgment

is mistaken indeed, for the very opposite is true. The basic reason for this concerted swing to the right of the officialdom, for this studied and systematic co-operation with all the varying forces and institutions of capitalism, is the fact that the masses are swinging to the left, are being disillusioned, are becoming radical. The reactionary officialdom cannot go along with the broad, sweeping radicalization of the masses, without making a clean break with their peaceful past. They are either corrupt agents of capitalism, or are timid bureaucrats seeking nothing but a peaceful office life with a secure salary. In either case, their reaction toward the seething rank and file unrest is one of fear, and retreat to the protecting arms of the masters, the capitalist employers.

That the collaboration schemes will prove destructive of trade unionism there is no question. But that they will solve any of the fundamental problems of the present industrial order, only the politically feeble-minded can believe. The collaboration policy is bound to fail as surely as water must seek its lowest level. In the meantime it must be combatted as the most dangerous and insidious enemy of the working class, and the one that will cost the greatest in working class sweat and blood to overcome. All honest and sincere workers, who realize the menace of the reactionary policies of class collaboration, and who seriously wish to engage in a concerted struggle against them, are joining in the work of the Trade Union Educational League, the organization of the left wing elements throughout the labor movement. The left wing has perfected its methods of work, crystallized its programs, and is rapidly mobilizing the rank and file for the regeneration of the labor movement. It is the duty of every revolutionary worker to join in this task.

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